

Article Alert

No. 09, September 2007

Published by the Information Resource Center, U.S. Embassy Jakarta

Information Resource Center

Public Affairs Section
U.S. Embassy Jakarta
Jl. Medan Merdeka Selatan 4-5,
Jakarta 10110
Phone: (021) 3508467, Fax: (021) 3508466,
e-mail: IRCAAlert@state.gov
Website: <http://jakarta.usembassy.gov>

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The books, articles, and web sites described in the Article Alert present a diversity of views in order to keep our IRC users abreast of current issues and concerns in the United States. These items represent the views and opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect official U.S. Government policy.

BLOGS FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

HOW 2.0 BLOG

Blogging in Government
Guidance on blogging in the government sector (<http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/technology/blogs.shtml>)

Big Read Blog – National Endowment for the Arts literature director David Kipen blogs regularly about his experiences promoting the 2007 Big Read initiative. (<http://www.nea.gov/bigreadblog/>)

Eye Level – This Smithsonian American Art Museum conversation covers American art and the ways it reflects American history and culture. (<http://eyelevel.si.edu/>)

Flow of the River – Find out the answers to interesting questions about the Environmental Protection Agency from their Chief Operating Officer Marcus Peacock. (http://www.epa.gov/Topics/Reference_Shelf/News/blog.shtml)

Future Digital System – Information about the U.S. Government Printing Office's Future Digital System program that will be a world-class information life-cycle management system (<http://fdsys.blogspot.com/>)

GLOBE Program – Dr. Peggy LeMone, chief scientist of the Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE). (<http://www.globe.gov/fsl/wordpress/>)

Health and Human Services Department Blog – Secretary Mike Leavitt blogs about health and the related challenges that face United States. (http://secretarysblog.hhs.gov/my_weblog/2007/08/index.html)

Homeland Security Leadership Journal – Secretary Michael Chertoff hosts a conversation about working to protect the American people, building an effective emergency preparedness and response capability, enforcing immigration laws, and promoting economic prosperity. (<http://www.dhs.gov/journal/leadership/>)

Library of Congress Blog – Highlights news and collections for the Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/blog/>)

National Museum of the Air Force – Blog posts from the public about their experiences at the National Museum of the Air Force (<http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/blog/index.asp>)

Peace Corps Volunteer Journals – Read about experiences of Peace Corps volunteers from around the globe. (<http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=learn.whatlike.voljournal>)

Pushing Back – Office of National Drug Control Policy blog to educate Americans about illegal drugs and the latest international, federal, state, and local efforts to reduce drug use. (http://pushingback.com/blogs/pushing_back/default.aspx)



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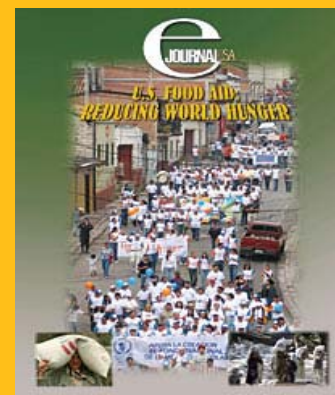
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What's New?



U.S. Food Aid: Reducing World Hunger

It is estimated that some 850 million people around the world suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Through articles written by NGO representatives and U.S. government officials, this edition of eJournal USA describes some of the ways in which the United States government works through its agencies and in conjunction with international organizations and NGOs to provide food and assistance to save lives and to help hungry people feed themselves.

Want to know more, please visit:
<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/ites/0907/ijee/ijee0907.htm>

International Religious Freedom 2007

The International Religious Freedom report is submitted to Congress annually by the Department of State in compliance with Section 102(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998. This report supplements the most recent Human Rights Reports by providing additional detailed information with respect to matters involving international religious freedom. It includes individual country chapters on the status of religious freedom worldwide.



For the fulltext of this report, please visit: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/>



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DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

1. Ratterman, Walt SOLAR ELECTRICITY FOR THE DEVELOPING WORLD (Home Power, no. 119, June/July 2007, pp. 96-100)

The author, with the Oregon-based SunEnergy Power Corp. and a veteran of overseas solar installation projects, writes that installing solar-electric systems in developing-nation communities is as much about "training yourself" as it is about training others, and is fundamentally about helping local villagers improve their lives in a manner in which they choose. He notes that before any hardware is installed, his group first travels to a village to teach the residents the basics of energy management and to develop an energy budget. Training villagers to troubleshoot and repair the systems, and fostering a sense of ownership, to include fiscal management strategies is vital; quality control and adherence to National Electrical Code standards is especially important when installing systems in remote areas. The article illustrates projects installed in India, the tribal areas of Pakistan, Ecuador, Peru, Rwanda and the Thailand-Burma border areas.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

2. Doanh, Nguyen Khanh; Heo, Yoon IMPACTS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS ON TRADE FLOWS IN ASEAN COUNTRIES (Journal of International and Area Studies, vol. 14, no. 1, June 2007, pp. 1-15)

Doanh, economics lecturer at Thainguyen University in Vietnam, and Heo, associate professor of international studies at Sogang University in Seoul, use empirical analysis to study the linkages between enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPR) and trade flows in ASEAN countries. Their analysis seeks to answer three main questions: Does stronger protection of IPRs affect ASEAN's exports and imports? How does IPR protection affect the trade flows of individual industries differently? Which policy implications can be derived from this study? The answers are complex, sometimes ambiguous, and IPR policies in the rest of the world have to be factored in along side those of ASEAN countries. An important consideration in building stronger IPR, they note, is it is needed to gain membership to the World Trade Organization. They expect the impact of WTO membership on the market power and market expansion effects on trade to be large in magnitude.

3. Modi, Vikram WRITING THE RULES: THE NEED FOR STANDARDIZED REGULATION OF ISLAMIC FINANCE (Harvard International Review, vol. 29, no. 1, Spring 2007, pp. 38-42)

Islamic finance fueled by petrodollars has been growing fast over the last decade, says Modi, associate editor of the Review. As Islamic and some regular banks develop Shari'ah-compliant financial products, the customer base is growing despite suspicions from some Islamic scholars. Some predominantly Muslim countries such as Libya and Morocco refuse to recognize Islamic banks, which they see as linked to Islamic parties. Others, such as Egypt and Tunisia, allow such banks to exist but impose little regulation. But there also are countries such as Bahrain and Malaysia

that not only offer substantial support to Islamic banking but also cooperate on regulatory issues. The author declares that consolidation, standardized regulation, greater transparency and innovation are needed to encourage growth of Islamic financial services. He suggests that Western countries with large Muslim populations follow the lead of the U.K Financial Service Authority, which holds Islamic banks to the same standards as conventional ones, but has modified laws to accommodate them, recognizing the unique nature of Islamic financial transactions.

4.Reich, Robert HOW CAPITALISM IS KILLING DEMOCRACY (Foreign Policy, no. 162, September/October 2007, pp. 38-43)

The fortunes of capitalism and democracy are beginning to diverge, says the author, secretary of labor during the Clinton administration. Free markets have brought unprecedented prosperity to many, but their expansion also has produced widening inequalities, heightened job insecurity and environmental hazards, he notes. Democracy, designed to allow citizens to address these issues, has been eroded by forces driving the supercharged global economy. No democratic nation effectively copes with capitalism's side effects and several countries such as China and Russia have embraced market economy but not political freedom, Reich says. The erosion of democracy derives from our desire to get bargains and high returns that trumps our civil and social concerns, he says. In effect, citizens and governments leave it up to corporations to set the rules of the game. And corporations, under pressure from fierce global competition, exploit and abuse the democratic process. They increasingly lobby and even bribe democratically elected representatives and government officials in self-interest, pushing public concerns aside. What's needed, Reich says, is a clear delineation of the boundary between global capitalism and democracy, between the economic game and the rule-setting process.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

5. Barron, Owen A NEW APPROACH: ENGAGING THE MUSLIM WORLD THROUGH PUBLIC DIPLOMACY (Harvard International Review, vol. 28, no. 4, Winter 2007, pp. 30-33)

Harvard International Review staff writer Owen Barron traces the history of American public diplomacy efforts. The author dwells on what is currently negative Arab public opinion of the U.S. However, although Arabs dislike American foreign policy, they affirm U.S. values. Barron offers several remedies for U.S. public diplomacy in this region of the world, including, not only explaining American values to Arabs, but, also, attempting to understand Islamic and Arabic cultures ourselves.

6. Lake, David A. ESCAPE FROM THE STATE OF NATURE: AUTHORITY AND HIERARCHY IN WORLD POLITICS (International Security, Vol. 32, No. 1, Summer 2007, pp. 47-79)

The conventional assumption is that international relations are a free-for-all, with each nation pursuing its interests and attempting to avoid domination by other nations. The author, professor of political science at the University of California at San Diego, argues, in contrast, that the international order is not a free-for-all, and that nations are like people -- they are willing to set aside the struggle for dominance if they can be part of a stable hierarchy that protects them. Oddly, accepting subordination to another nation has its advantages: more economic benefits go to consumers, and less money is spent on the military. Thus, proud nations are willing to barter away some of their independence for protection by a stronger power against security threats. The author attempts to construct objective measurements of security and economic hierarchies and coercive capabilities. He posits hierarchy measurement as a way of considering whether America is or is not an empire. Lake asserts that the U.S. has managed to construct a favorable political, military and economic hierarchy, first in Latin America, then Europe, and since then elsewhere. However, he adds, this hierarchy is now in jeopardy due to the war in Iraq, which is being waged without the support of America's allies.

U.S. SOCIETY & VALUES

7. Greene, Daniel "MEMORY IS A SHIELD": A CONVERSATION WITH ELIE WIESEL (Museum News, vol. 86, no. 4, July/August 2007, pp. 36-41)

Although many people have written about the Holocaust, few have done so with the poignancy of Elie Wiesel. Wiesel was fifteen years old when he was deported to Auschwitz; he survived the Holocaust to offer testimony about its horrors to a world that did not always want to remember. In 1978, Wiesel was asked by U.S. president Jimmy Carter to head his Presidential Commission on the Holocaust, a group later known as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. The group visited former concentration camps, met with European officials to ask for records pertaining to Holocaust victims, and was responsible for the creation of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. In 1986, for his work on behalf of victims everywhere, Wiesel was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. This discussion between Wiesel and Daniel Greene, historian at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), took place as part of the Museum's podcast series "Voices on Antisemitism", to raise public awareness about threats of prejudice and hatred.

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☐ New E-Journal, "U.S. Food Aid: Reducing World Hunger"

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